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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Directorate of Intelligence
2 June 1967

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

Arab-Israeli Situation Report
(As of 1700 EDT)

1. Only initial reactions have been received from various countries on the joint declaration of maritime powers reaffirming the principle of freedom of transit in the Gulf of Aqaba. A number of nations publicly supported this principle during the UN debates in early 1957 as part of the general international effort to secure Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. In Western Europe today, however, there remains considerable uncertainty about the subsequent steps to be undertaken by Western nations in response to Egypt's blockade.

2. Most of these countries would probably support or accept some form of association with a simple declaration asserting the principle of free transit in the Gulf. However, such countries as Italy and France have indicated their unwillingness to go along at this time maintaining that the time has not come for such action. In an informal meeting of the NATO permanent representatives on 30 May only the Belgian, Dutch and German representatives spoke clearly in favor of the principle of the freedom of passage through the Gulf. The Italian representative said that his government was strongly in favor of keeping the matter in the UN and would be against any other initiatives. The Canadian representative as well as the Danish representative said that it would be tactically unwise to introduce this declaration at this time.

3. The International Red Cross today said it had evidence that poison gas was being used in the Yemen,

State Department review completed

[redacted]

but it did not identify the alleged aggressor. A Red Cross medical team was said to have given treatment to some of the wounded and collected "various indications pointing to the use of poisonous gas." The statement added that the Red Cross convoy itself had been attacked by aircraft during the raid.

4. The Syrian government appears to be surprised and taken aback by the new Jordanian-Egyptian defense pact. No direct mention of it had been made in the Syrian press as of 1 June. U.S. officials in Syria have received reports that a number of known Nasirists have been arrested in the past few days, and this may be related to Syrian discomfort over the Nasir-Husayn rapprochement. [redacted]

25X1 [redacted] The Syrians probably have reason to feel somewhat disgruntled, seeing as how they have been completely upstaged by Nasir's recent moves against the alleged Israeli military threat. The Syrian reaction may take the form of attempts to instigate some "desperate" measure to regain their position as front runner among the Arab radicals.

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5. Egypt's Foreign Minister Mahmud Riad today warned sea-going countries that their interests would be endangered should they join in any aggression against Egypt. He also declared that any attempts to declare the Gulf of Aqaba an international waterway would be regarded as a move "to serve Israeli aggression."

6. Jean Paul Sartre has fallen victim to the current Middle East crisis. At a meeting of intellectuals in Cairo yesterday a resolution was passed denouncing him for supporting Israeli claims to Aqaba Gulf rights. Only a month ago he was lionized during a Cairo-sponsored visit to Egypt where he was entertained by Egyptian leaders.

7. Three explosions hit U.S. installations in Jidda Saudi Arabia today. The American Embassy, the office of the U.S. military training mission, and a U.S. construction firm compound all were the targets of bombings. No one was reported injured, and little damage appears to have been done.

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Approved For Release 2005/08/17 : CIA-RDP79T00826A002000010078-8

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